1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu



A few boys and men (six of them) are allowed to come in during the night and watch them, for which privilege they pay *tsera* and tobacco to Sola and Mekeo. The observers must eat some of the fat from the pigs which have been killed for the feast to be held in the morning. This is a ritual duty, and the fat is not eaten because they like it. Sometimes a man who cannot stomach the fat will merely lick it with his tongue. No native explanation for this custom exists, but it is believed that some misfortune would befall the man who had neglected to eat the fat: he might cut himself while felling a tree, or fall from a tree and die. No one else sees these *Pundän*, and after the rites they are destroyed, even before the *malanggans*.

The next morning about a hundred men gather in the enclosure at Ponatlege. The two *Pundän* are out of sight in the separate little enclosure behind the *malanggan* house, in front of which the food is piled—two pigs, baked taro, bananas, and a species of chestnut (*koh*). Sola stands up and talks: "These two pigs belong to the concluding rites for the *malanggan*. We have made big rites for them. All the men and all the women ate pigs. Now to-day we, the men, but not the women, will eat pigs. Why have not all the men from Langania come? All the men from Lesu and Ambwa are here. The Langania men did not come because they are lazy." Sola now gives *tsera* to one man in payment for the pig. He has contributed the other one himself. The food is distributed according to traditional custom. After this Sola comes out adorned with a feather headdress, a bright red loin-cloth, a pig's liver hanging out of his mouth, the shark fishing rattle in one hand, and a smaller shell rattle in the other. *Kerapo* leaves are stuck in his armband. Thus arrayed, he dances up and down the centre of the enclosure and sings, or rather hums a wordless song. This performance is called *baeas*.

When the men have eaten there are speeches by the old

3: Chinnery G, E-5 (1929) 1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10



which gives each of them what they lack. In the vicinity of Lambuso, Pinigindu, Lemasong and Lugagun are sago swamps, which are relied upon in time of famine to support the people of the lower road, the owners then reaping large supplies of shell-money by selling the sago.

Dry spells from time to time produce food shortages, but as a rule these are apparently not very serious. In 1914 (?), however, no rain fell for about a year (?), and the people were in great distress. The whole country suffered from drought, and, excepting from the sago swamps, there was practically no food procurable. The period of drought and famine culminated in a series of destructive bush fires along the whole line of coast, bush and mountain ranges, and, from the graphic descriptions given to me, everything perished—wallabies, in fact, have scarcely been seen since. It is extremely probable that a great loss of life followed this period of famine. The natives said that only those with plenty of shell-money were able to keep themselves supplied with sago. People scattered far and wide, especially in the direction of Tabr, looking for food.

The natives now divide their time between work in their gardens and work on road maintenance, and it is possible that in some areas the demands of the road at times lead to neglect of garden work. The people of the mountain villages have villages on the coast, to which they come for a few days when their road services are due. I think this division of work and the areas for which the various villages are responsible should be made the subject of a special investigation by the district officials. Mr. Waugh, the District Officer, has in mind a scheme for the maintenance of a mobile road gang, with adequate transport facilities. If something of the kind were possible the natives could spend more time in their gardens and coco-nut groves.

## HOUSING.

When I first went down the Kavieng road in 1924 most of the natives' houses were small, neat-looking, rectangular structures built on piles some feet above the ground. This was a standard pattern that had been introduced by the District Officials. On this occasion, however, I noticed that in most of the villages the people were living in their old type of house. Whether these are healthier than the introduced structures I cannot tell, but it seems to me much better to improve the structure they desire to live in than to force them to build houses which they will probably vacate as soon as the Government official's back is turned. The type of house, the erection of it, and everything connected with it, is definitely part of native culture and as such should be preserved as far as possible.